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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, December 10, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CHRISTMAS TOWELS AND BEDSPREADS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, the mail-pile still holds some Christmas shopping questions. The lady who inquired about good buys in Christmas bath-towels has not had an answer yet. Neither has the one who asked for information on bedspreads. So in order not to hold up the progress of Santa Claus, let's give these questions first place on the program today.

The listener who inquires about bath-towels says she finds such an array of towels in the stores, so many different kinds, colors, sizes and prices that she is having difficulty in making a choice. She wonders if any study has been made of bath towels to find out which give the best service.

I'll answer by telling her about a study of cotton Turkish towels made last year by the textile people at the Bureau of Home Economics. The towels they studied were white but some had colored borders. They were all 22 by 44 inches -- or as near that size as possible. And they ranged in retail price from 14 cents to a dollar and a half apiece. The textile people were interested in such qualities as strength and weight and water absorption, so they studied the ply of the yarn, and the number of twists per inch of yarn, and the thread count, and the length of the loop.

They found that the towels that had longer loops and higher thread-count were thicker and heavier than those with scanty loops. They tested the "breaking strength" of each towel as an indication of durability. And they tested each towel to see how well it absorbed moisture -- for its "drying ability," you might say. They found that the thickest, heaviest towels took up moisture more slowly than the thinner, lighter-weight towels. But they also found that these thin towels became saturated more quickly. And these thinner towels did not wear as well. So you as a shopper have to decide whether you prefer a towel that will give a speedy rub-down or one that will wear and last a long time.

As for the best buy in size and color, this is largely a matter of personal taste. Turkish towels come in all sizes from the small "hand" or "face" size to the 2-yard length large enough to wrap around a 6-foot man. The disadvantage of these very large towels is that they are often awkward to handle in the home laundry and can run up the cost of laundry done outside if you pay for your laundry by the pound. So probably for general use the medium-size bath towels, either 20 by 42 or 22 by 44 inches is most convenient for family use. It is a handy size for everybody.

As for color and design, you will probably want to choose these to suit the decoration of your friend's bathroom. You will be glad to know that the better quality towels are all dyed with lasting colors these days. And you can find designs enough to suit anyone's fancy.



If choosing from the great variety of towels is a problem to you, you are likely to find the bedspread department of the store a maze -- variety galore in fabric, color, price, design and what not. You'll have your choice of dressy bedspreads of taffeta and lace or old-fashioned bedspreads like candlewick tufted and colonial hand-wovens down to simple cotton spreads like seersucker and chintz. The kind of spread you choose depends on the furnishings in the bedroom as well as on the wear you want from the spread and the price you want to pay. But the textile people have some general suggestions to help you in buying almost any type.

They suggest checking on 4 points in any spread -- a generous size, a substantial edge-finish, well-made seams and good fabrics. These are the qualities that make a spread wear well and look attractive.

First, about size. To look well, the spread must be large enough to cover the bed and pillows and still tuck in at the foot of the bed. But you will find both skimpy and generous sizes on the market. Spreads sold for double beds vary from 80 to 90 inches in width and from 90 to 114 inches in length. Naturally, the 90-inch length won't allow for both covering pillows and tucking in at the foot. So you'll be wise to measure before you buy.

The edge-finish and seams of the spread are also important for wear and appearance. Notice whether the ends are cut straight with the weave of the fabric. Some spreads that are cut crooked are finished to appear straight at the store. Their "crookedness" comes out only after laundering. If you are buying a spread with scalloped edges, notice whether the stitches are deep enough so they won't pull out, and close enough together to prevent fraying. Notice too how the hems are finished -- if they are turned under firmly and stitched with close even stitches. By the way, a good average number of stitches is 14 to the inch. In general, the fewer the seams or other joinings, the longer the spread will last. But be sure that any seam is deep enough to hold. A frayed or pulled-out seam is difficult to mend.

As for the fabric, whether it is silk, rayon, cotton, linen or wool, a firm even weave of smooth even yarns is the one that lasts longest and keeps its attractive appearance. Loose sleazy fabrics slip easily and soon pull out of place. Lumpy or uneven fabrics often break in the thin spots or catch and snag.

Once more then, whether your choice is a fancy or plain spread or a costly or inexpensive one, the points to look for before you buy are: generous size, lasting edge-finish, well-made seams, and a fabric that is durable as well as good-looking.

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